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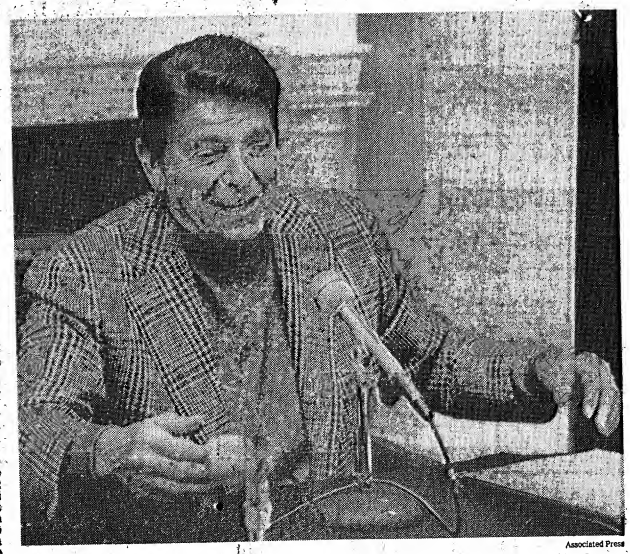
Excerpts From the President's Interview on Radio After Weekly Address

Following are excerpts from questions and answers from President Reagan's radio interview after his weekly address in Washington yesterday, as transcribed by The New York Times and the White House:



Associated Press

President Reagan after an interview that followed his radio address from the Roosevelt Room of the White House.

Action on Jobs Bill

Q. Mr. President, with the lame duck Congress in rather noisy session, our gaze inevitably falls on Capitol Hill. Technically many government agencies are out of cash today because there's still no stopgap funding authority. Now you threatened to veto the so-called continuing resolution if it contains what you call the pork barrel jobs bill. The fact of the matter is the Senate has voted $1.2 billion to that aim, the House $5.4 billion. The estimate is you'll get a compromise that contains somewhere in the area of about $2 billion. Isn't that the bottom line that you're going to be able to accept? In light of the trouble you've had with this lame duck session, are you going to take Senator Hatfield's suggestion and take the $2 billion and run or are you going to stand and fight?

A. Well, obviously I have to wait and see what comes down to me and what's in front of me before I actually say veto or the other way, but I have to tell you this: I cannot sign that bill. I will have to veto if it contains these various amounts that have been suggested, because in truth these aren't job-creating bills. The $.4, for example, that was introduced in the House, I think that a great many Congressmen, in fact some of them openly admit it, were calling it a free vote in which they could apparently vote for a job bill knowing that I would veto it and that they wouldn't have to live with it.

Actually that $.4 is not a job-creation bill. It is a pork barrel and filled with all sorts of projects, many of which wouldn't create employment at all and many which wouldn't create employment while one particular wouldn't even be effective until 1985. That's not going to help the unemployed today. But also, many of those would — whatever work they would create would be at a tremendous cost.

For example, in the Bureau of Reclamation Project that has been included in there, it would cost $40,000 for every job that would be created. In the General Services Administration, the element that's in there, that would be $25,000 per job. And, as I say, there's another one, a billion-dollar program, that wouldn't begin until 1985. So I just think the answer to recovery has to be — or to unemployment I should say, is recovery. And anything that adds to the deficit and delays economic recovery is going to set us back far more than a temporary job.

The military bill — the Pentagon asked for less than half of the amount that they've added in this bill in the House for military residence construction, so there's half of that that wouldn't even be spent.

Q. Well, now, you seem to have made up your mind already. You say if those figures that I mentioned are the figure that actually reach your desk, you would have to veto. What is there to study then?

A. Well, the thing is, if it contains the things that are originally there — on the other hand, they come down with some addition to this that is in another area that you look at and say, well, there is a value to this and while I would prefer that if we not increase the budgeting, I would have to look and see does the value offset the risk of adding this to the deficit. But when I was talking here, I was talking of the things that we presently know are there. You know, when a couple of — an orange and an apple went into the conference committee, it might come out a pear.

Report on MX Missile

Q. Mr. President, the continuing resolution will probably also contain the MX proposal, and you just appointed a commission to look into the basing options for MX. I was wondering, given the complexity of that task, is it realistic to expect them to report by March first or could that date somehow be slipped?

A. I think it is, because of all the study, the research, that has gone into this before. This whole thing came about — we asked originally for money to begin the process of building the MX. We don't even have an assembly line for building missiles. That was done away with in the previous Administration. And we asked for the right to put them, the first ones off the line, into MX existing — into Minuteman silos while we continue to study a basing plan.

The Congress denied us the right to do this, the ability to do it, and so we continued to study, and the dense pack basing mode — and it may still turn out to be the one that has the least warts. There's something wrong with every system. But I was required to come up by Dec. 1 having selected a basing mode, and this was the best one we had on hand. So there was no opportunity to consult with them or for them to have access to all the study and the research that have gone on.

We hope now in these few months that we can present everything, and if some of our scientists come up with a new and improved mode, why, we'll take a good look at that one.

Q. Are you willing to accept whatever the commission comes up with?

A. Well it would depend on whether there was other agreement with the commission, too, and by that I mean the expertise of our own military people, who are going to have to use these weapons if they're ever used. And let me add here, unless there's misunderstanding of that line, the real purpose of those missiles is to never be used. We're trying to create a deterrent that will prevent there ever being a need for them or a war.

Strength of Soviet Forces

Q. Mr. President, you have spoken about a window of vulnerability, and you've said that the United States, in terms of defenses, is inferior to the Soviet Union in many areas. My question is, looking at U.S. defenses overall, would you trade American forces for Soviet forces?

A. Obviously the answer would be as it's been for many military men. No, because of my faith in America and in the young men and women of America who are in our armed forces. But I still have to say that to continue as we have been in the previous decade and the last several years, leaving those fine young men and women with tools incapable of doing the job, endangering their lives by lack of training because we were denied the fuel through budgetary restrictions to fly airplanes as often as they should.

On any given day when we came into office here, only half the airplanes in our Air Force could be flown because of lack of spare parts. Only half the ships could leave harbor, for lack not only of spare parts but of complete crew. So what we're trying to do is make sure, and we have made remarkable progress.

There is an esprit d'corps in our military today and a pride in the uniform that I think would bring a glow to every American's heart if they were as aware of it as I of necessity am. And so the answer would be no in that one way.

But if you ask me is there still a window of vulnerability, do they have a superiority in firepower and so forth, the answer is an unqualified yes. You can't help but look at the NATO line, with more than 300 triple-warhead missiles, intermediate range, aimed at the targets of all of Europe, the Middle East and northern Africa, and we have not in that theater, is a valid comparison.

Q. Mr. President, we also do have submarine missiles in the area which would serve an intermediate missile function.

A. And they have submarines and submarine missiles. And a part of the threat is not only what's on hand. It is that at the moment their rate of increase in their weapons compared to ours. In the last 15 years, I think, they added some 60 submarines, nuclear submarines, while we were adding none.

Q. Just one last follow-up question. We are adding the Trident submarines, are we not, at this point?

A. Yes. And they're adding one that's bigger and carries more missiles.

Future of the MX

Q. Mr. President, what if this commission you're going to appoint comes back to you and says: The MX may not be such a good idea, after all. Let's have a modification of the Trident or some other variation on the missile. Will you be able to accept that kind of recommendation?

A. Well we'd certainly look at it. I would — it would be difficult for me to think that we could, knowing the length of time that it takes to get something researched, tested fully and then into operation. Even with this MX and with all of the work that's been done so far, that system won't begin to be installed until 1986, won't be operational.

Q. So for logistical reasons you would be inclined to stand firm on the MX as a system?

A. Yes, let me just say though, lest you think I have a closed mind. If a miracle happens and someone came along with something that could be implemented better and sooner, obviously we'd choose that.

Role in Boston Quota Case

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to move to a different area. In Boston, during the period of budget cutting, the First U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that white police officers and firefighters be laid off rather than blacks and Hispanics with less seniority. This was done to maintain minority percentages. Why did your Administration ask the Supreme Court to strike down the lower court's order?

A. We did it because, number one, in the law itself it says that hiring or firing cannot be on the basis of race, and second, that the Federal courts have no authority to come in with regard to overthrowing seniority. There is a third reason. I'm old enough to remember when quota systems and so forth were used, not to end discrimination, but actually to legitimize it. And the precedent that would be set if this policy, which is embodied in law and all of seniority and layoffs is used in this instance, admittedly to try to keep a better balance, which we're all in favor of in public employment in that area, but if that precedent is set that seniority is meaningless, and that purpose, someday you could find an Administration that wants to turn it around and use it to go back to what we hopefully have gotten rid of in this country, a discrimination against minorities.

Q. There could be or there could have been other options. Let's say, for example, some sort of proportional layoff system, which I understand the U.S. Civil Rights Commission had recommended. But why shouldn't affirmative action supporters view this voluntary entry, your Administration's voluntary entry into the case, as an attack on affirmative action?

A. Well, maybe some of them will, because an image has been created of me, I know, that I do not support these antidiscrimination measures. The record, on the other hand, proves the reverse. As the Governor of California, I appointed more minority members to executive and policymaking positions in the state government than all the previous governors in the history of California put together.

Here we have already — and we haven't been here two years yet — we have 130 members of the black community in top executive positions, beginning with Sam Pierce, a very capable member of our Cabinet, and two assistant Cabinet members, and this includes — and then added to that we're doing the same thing with regard to women, and we're doing the same thing with regard to Hispanics.

The most recent Hispanic employee is one I'm very proud of, Everett Alvarez, who has the record of having been held in captivity the longest as a P.O.W. in Vietnam. And he is the Deputy Administrator of the Veteran's Administration. But our record there — but also, if you'll look at the Justice Department and the Legal Employment Opportunities Commission, you will find that we've broken all records in the history of the national government with regards to hearings on violations of civil rights, on trials and on successful convictions of violations of civil rights. So I think our record — and incidentally just yesterday I signed a paper with a group of minority small business people that is going to increase the amount of procurement that the Federal Government buys from minority-owned businesses.

Appeal of Presidency

Q. I get the impression from afar that the job may have lost some of its appeal, especially for Mrs. Reagan as a result of the assassination attempt. Is that true?

A. I know that this was quite a traumatic experience for her. I also know that — you know, the government, for the First Lady gets an employee free. They have her just about as busy as they have me. But, no, she's made no decision either. She and I are together on this. But I have to tell you, frankly, I have enjoyed the opportunity of dealing with the problems that are before us. I think we've made great progress in a definite turn in government and turning away from some of the things that have brought on the very economic crisis we're suffering from. And it has its drawbacks, of course. You either live in a — like a bird in a gilded cage, and I sometimes look out the window at Pennsylvania Avenue and wonder what it would be like to be able to just walk down the street to the corner drugstore and look at the magazines. I can't do that anymore.

PERSONAL INTEREST MOVED ROADS BILL

Pennsylvania Accident Victim Worked for Safety Measure

By MARJORIE HUNTER
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 17 — The doctors told Representative Bud Shuster to take it easy after two operations for a broken neck.

But for the past week the Pennsylvania Republican has been on the floor of the House, working as Republican manager of the bill that would raise gasoline taxes to pay for a $5.5 billion job-creation program for highway and bridge repairs.

Injured in a head-on automobile collision in Pennsylvania on Oct. 11, Mr. Shuster spent a week or so in a hospital there, being treated for rib fractures, hand injuries and contusions. Not until nearly a month later did doctors at Bethesda Naval Hospital discover he had also suffered a neck fracture.

Returned to Manage Bill

While he was still weak from the operations that followed the diagnosis, he was determined to help manage the bill he had helped draft. So it was that he arrived on Capitol Hill on a hospital mattress in the back of a van, then was shifted to a wheelchair. Before reaching the floor he left the wheelchair.

His neck was in a tight brace, but he spent more than six hours on the floor, alloting speaking time to colleagues and occasionally making speeches.

"We are talking about highway safety here," he said, a bit ruefully. "I might add that I conducted a one-man demonstration project a month or so ago to see whether or not seat belts worked. I can report that they do, because I would not be here today as a result of a head-on collision but for the fact that I had my seat belt on."

Ordered Back to Bed

Finally, feeling wobbly, he went to the Republican cloakroom for a snack. There, he was noticed by a doctor, who ordered him home to bed.

While he missed final passage of the measure hours later, his role in helping to manage the bill did not go unsung.

Representative Don H. Clausen, Republican of California, said, "If ever there was a gentleman who made the extra effort, went that extra mile on behalf of his own responsibilities, it was Bud Shuster of Pennsylvania."

The New York Times

Representative Bud Shuster

And Representative James J. Howard, Democrat of New Jersey, said, "In many, many ways this is to a good measure the Shuster bill."

'Generous' Vote Tally Shows Holiday Spirit

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 18 — Saturday sessions of the Senate and the House of Representatives are none too popular with lawmakers who have other things to do with their time one week before Christmas.

There were only a few dozen members on the floor of the House when Representative Romano L. Mazzoli, a Kentucky Democrat who is the chief sponsor of an immigration bill being considered by the House, moved to take up the bill today.

There was a roar of laughter when the results of a vote on Mr. Mazzoli's request were announced: 244 to 7, according to the House Speaker, Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. of Massachusetts.

However, subsequent quorum calls and roll-call votes showed that more than 300 of the 435 House members were on Capitol Hill.

President Indicating an Invitation to Offer Congress a Compromise

Continued From Page 1

Congress, would seek to de-emphasize the job programs somehow while seeking greater stress on such "humanitarian" proposals as increases in assistance to the unemployed.

As Mr. Reagan spoke, the House and Senate were working their way through another day of deadlocks. Each house has approved separate financing bills, yet to be reconciled, to keep Government agencies open on Monday and provide as well for emergency job programs to deal with the country's record unemployment.

Mr. Reagan said he "would have to veto" either of the stopgap bills because of their inclusion of rival job programs costing $5.4 billion in the version approved by the Democratic-controlled House, and $1.2 billion in the version of the Republican-controlled Senate.

He resorted to words of compromise and his hope to produce a "pear" in the conference talks, when he was asked about speculation that the legislators' free-for-all conference might perhaps settle on a $2 billion jobs compromise.

Reagan Criticizes Filibuster

On other issues, the President criticized the Senate filibuster against the bill for a 5 cent-a gallon gasoline tax increase to pay for highway repairs, which is led by a group of conservative Republicans. "I think it's ridiculous for a minority to stand in the way of this bill," he said.

Reagan Administration strategists originally hoped that this bill, which would create about 320,000 transportation repair jobs, would satisfy the political need for dealing with the persistent unemployment issue. Twelve million workers are jobless and the rate has been climbing toward 11 percent.

But Republicans and Democrats in both houses have pressed for more job money, despite the President's criticism that the measures would be wasteful and counterproductive for the economic recovery that, he insists, has begun.

On Re-election Bid in '84

The President commented on a number of additional topics, including the question of his own political future. "The people kind of have a way of letting you know," he replied, offering his stock answer when asked about declaring for re-election in 1984.

He said a decision would have to be made next year, but he cautioned himself, in effect, in noting that "to make it public too early" is to risk being considered either a lame-duck or a totally opportunistic President intent on re-election.

He discussed the pros and cons of residing in the White House, saying he felt "like a bird in a gilded cage."

"I sometimes look out the window at Pennsylvania Avenue and wonder what it would be like to be able to just walk down the street to the corner drugstore and look at the magazines," he said. "I can't do that anymore."

On Job Seniority in Boston Case

The President was asked about the Administration's recent decision to oppose a Federal court ruling that protected the jobs of black and Hispanic public service workers in Boston over whites with greater seniority at a time when Boston had a need for budgetary layoffs. He said the law made it clear that race should not be involved in hiring or dismissing and that "Federal courts have no authority to come in with regard to seniority."

"There is a third reason," he said. "I'm old enough to remember when quota systems and so forth were used not to end discrimination but actually to legitimize it." While he denounced discrimination against minorities, he said his concern was that "someday you could find an Administration that wants to turn it around" and promote discrimination.

In discussing the economy, President Reagan complained that the nation's news-gathering organizations had distorted the delicate "psychological" factors he sees as part of the attempt at recovery.

"There is a great psychology that is part of a recession, both for good or bad," he said. "And I have to tell you that, right now, I think the media has overemphasized the bad for whatever reason, but generally in a sense that, psychologically, has not been of help."

'Quick Fixes' Are Assailed

He criticized the headlined "artificial quick fixes," as he describes the job bills on Capitol Hill, and praised the progress that he said he saw in achieving reduced inflation and interest rates and spurring automobile and housing sales.

"The trouble is things like that aren't being as visible," Mr. Reagan said.

The President, who suffered a severe loss when the House rejected his request for production of the MX missile, said that "it would be difficult for me to think" that an alternative, scaled-down plan for some other modified missile might arise through his new attempt to resurrect the MX.

The President announced Friday that he would appoint a bipartisan commission of technical and military experts to seek an alternative to his plan for grouping MX silos close together. He said today that, whatever the basing method, he preferred the MX to some other missile.

"Lest you think I have a closed mind," he added, "if a miracle happened and someone came along with something that could be implemented better and sooner, obviously, we'd choose that."

On Social Security Deficits

In discussing the problem of looming deficits in the Social Security system, Mr. Reagan again refused to "interfere" and signal a preference. He fairly implored his own study commission to end its deadlock and produce at least partial recommendations.

"Even if they will come back with, let's say, alternatives," he said, "a couple of alternatives, so that at least you can sit down and say, 'All right, let's find a meeting ground.'"

After his wistful self-description as the nation's "bird in the gilded cage," Mr. Reagan was asked how he kept in touch with ordinary people and "what it's like to be unemployed."

"You are not that separated from the world," he responded, noting once again that he had hunted for a job in the Depression. He said a sense of real life came from "the people that are all around you" in the White House, including his bodyguards, as well as "the neighbors" he said he encountered on trips home to his ranch in California.

The President described that feeling of returning home from Washington in terms that were nearly ethereal. "It is as if this had never happened," said Mr. Reagan, seated in the Roosevelt Room of the White House.

Jobless Rate Up in All States

WASHINGTON, Dec. 18 (AP) — Unemployment in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia was higher in October than in the same month in 1981, the Labor Department has reported. It was the first time in the current recession that the year-to-year monthly employment comparisons showed no state escaping rising unemployment.

Only South Dakota had been spared worsening employment in September, when the figures were compared with those for September 1981, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The preliminary figures, which are not adjusted for seasonal variations, showed that 19 states and the nation's capital had double-digit unemployment in October, and that Michigan, heavily reliant on the automobile industry, had unemployment in excess of 10 percent of its labor force for the 34th consecutive month.

The unadjusted unemployment rate nationwide for October was 9.9 percent, according to the latest bureau report.

When seasonal factors were considered, the unemployment rate for October was 10.4 percent. That overall figure climbed to 10.8 percent for November, with 12 million people out of work.

The preliminary figures for October showed West Virginia the state with the highest unemployment rate, 15.3 percent, with Alabama next at 15 percent and Michigan at 14.9.

The states with the lowest unemployment rates were South Dakota with 5 percent, North Dakota at 5.5 percent and Nebraska at 5.6 percent.

The survey released this week also said that unemployment in 94 of 220 metropolitan areas surveyed reached or exceeded the national average in October.

The highest rate, 20.6 percent, was recorded by Flint, Mich. with Rockford, Ill., next at 20.5

The lowest unemployment rates were recorded by Stamford, Conn., 3.8 percent, and Sioux Falls, S.D., 4.4 percent.

Yacht in Race Around World Runs Aground Off Australia

SYDNEY, Australia, Dec. 18 (Reuters) — The yacht Gipsy Moth V, on the second leg of a round-the-world solo race, ran aground and was breaking up tonight on Gabo Island off the New South Wales coast.

A spokesman, Kim Mackay, said the yacht's skipper, Desmond Hampton of Britain, was believed to have fallen asleep at the helm.

She said that the yacht, badly holed in the forward section, was "sitting up high and dry on the rocks" and that Mr. Hampton was trying to strip it of its gear before it broke up.

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